THOMAS STRINGER

HIS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING DURING THE YEAR 1899-1900

BY

MICHAEL ANAGNOS

[Reprinted from the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Kindergarten for the Blind]

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THOMAS STRINGER.

THOMAS STRINGER.

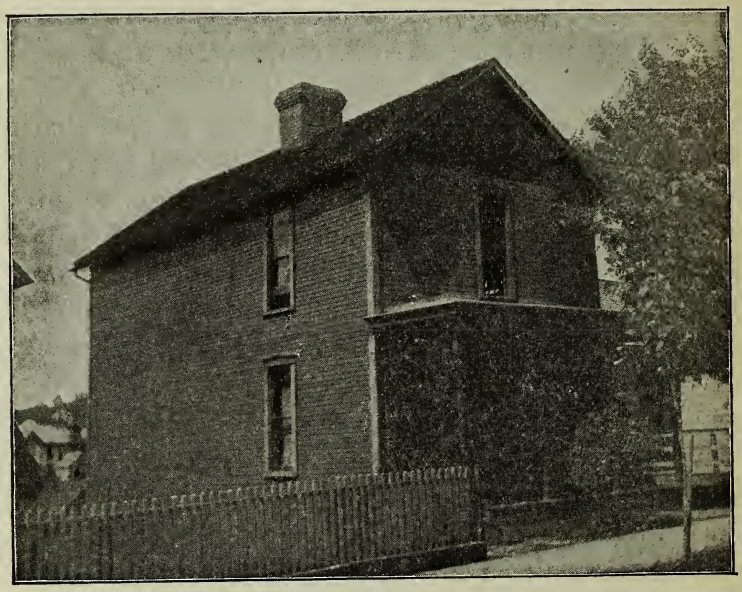
I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of all around me; and to me
High mountains are as feeling.
— BYRON.

These words of the great poet are so peculiarly appropriate to the case of Tommy Stringer, that they almost seem as if expressly written to give utterance to his sentiments and to portray his happy deliverance from solitary confinement in the dreadful dungeon of total darkness and of absolute stillness and his restoration to his human estate.

When we consider the forlorn and distressing condition, in which Tommy was nine years ago, and compare it with that in which he is now, we cannot help seeing that a wonderful development has taken place in his case, which, whether it is regarded from a physical or from an intellectual and moral standpoint, represents an educational achievement of the utmost importance.

Tommy was born near Waynesburg, Greene county, Pennsylvania, on the third day of July, 1886. In early infancy he sustained an irreparable loss through the death of his mother. This affliction was followed by a terrible disease, spinal meningitis, which left the hapless baby at the age of two years without the senses of sight and of hearing. After the occurrence of this frightful calamity his father removed to Washington, Pennsylvania, whence the little child was taken subsequently to the Allegheny hospital.

On the eighth of April, 1891, Tommy was brought to us from that institution, under the care of one of its nurses, who seemed to be very much attached to him. He was then nothing but a mass of flesh, fashioned in the form of a child, with the breath of life in it; a spiritless little creature with a low



THE HOUSE IN WASHINGTON, PENN., FROM WHICH TOMMY WAS TAKEN TO THE ALLEGHENY HOSPITAL.

degree of intelligence, somewhat resembling a puppy in his instincts and characteristics.

On the day of his arrival in Boston Tommy was placed in the kindergarten for the blind at Jamaica Plain in charge of a special teacher, who was employed to devote all her time to him, and measures were immediately taken to awake him from his torpid condition and to discover some way of penetrating the triple walls of the prison, in which his spirit was locked up.

The task of rescuing the little victim of affliction from the captivity of darkness and of bringing him out into the light of intelligence and of human fellowship was a tremendous one. Indeed, when all circumstances attendant on his case are taken into account, it is no exaggeration to call it herculean. Owing to his physical infirmity and mental vacuity there seemed little hope of improvement. He was heedless, dull, inactive and a very unpromising subject. He was found to be as passionate as a little brute, tearing his clothes and screaming violently. He was entirely isolated from the rest of mankind and utterly indifferent to what was going on around him. He had no means of expressing himself save a monotonous, fretful moan, which was not a cry and which manifested neither pleasure nor pain. Although he was nearly five years old, he could not walk upright, but crawled on hands and feet, and that backward, for sad experience had evidently taught him that, when he crept forward, his head ran the risk of coming unexpectedly in contact with things harder than itself.

Such was Tommy when he was received at the kindergarten, and we set about the task of transforming him and making an intelligent boy of him.

From the very start it was obvious to us, that nothing could be done to arouse the helpless little creature from the strange drowsiness, which "had locked up his mortal sense," and to quicken his mental faculties without a decided amelioration of his physical organization. Hence our principal efforts were at once concentrated upon the attainment of this end. A series of simple exercises were prescribed for him and were carried on faithfully. These

were calculated to strengthen his flabby muscles, to quicken the circulation of the blood and build up his nerve-tissues, to regulate the performance of his bodily functions, to increase his vital force and corporeal activity and thus enable him to stand erect and move about unassisted, to feed and dress or undress himself and to walk and play in the open air.

Through constant efforts and innumerable trials, varying both in character and in duration, a positive gain was obtained in this direction, and then steps were taken to establish the means of communication between Tommy and the outer world.

The methods and processes employed for the accomplishment of this purpose were precisely those, which were devised by the illustrious liberator of Laura Bridgman, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, and used by him with wonderful success in the emancipation of his famous pupil. These were applied in Tommy's case with unwavering faith, ardent hope, steadfast perseverance and intense enthusiasm. Most of the operations were repeated hour after hour with unflagging industry and renewed ingenuity, but apparently without effect. The enormous difficulties, with which the pathway to progress was thickly beset, were intensified by Tommy's stolid apathy and obstinate resistance. He was unwilling to make the slightest exertion, and it appeared more than probable that the efforts to reach his mind, put forth by his teachers, would result in failure. But in spite of these immense obstacles and in the face of —

> The body's ills that clog the mind
> And the bold spirit bind,

the work of rescuing the unfortunate child went on

uninterruptedly, and, although it was prosecuted with great earnestness and exemplary fidelity, days, weeks and months had to pass before he could be made to comprehend that things have names, which can be represented by arbitrary signs or letters of the manual alphabet, formed upon the fingers. Finally a ray of light was introduced into the prison-cell of his mind, dispersing gradually the sullen clouds that surrounded it, and the education of Tommy was fairly begun.

He was put through a regular and systematic course of training, based upon Froebel's principles of natural development and of "learning by doing," and a veritable pedagogical miracle has been wrought. Out of the puny, weakly, listless, lifeless little creature with debilitated body and vacant mind there has been evolved a fine specimen of childhood,— a most attractive boy,— tall, erect, robust, manly, straightforward, alert, self-reliant, alive from top to toe, thirsting insatiably for knowledge and possessed of a brain which is well stored with general information and teeming with ingenious conceptions. It is indeed a "far cry," as one friend has aptly expressed it, from the Tommy Stringer of those early days, — as he is represented in the first photograph which was taken of him several months after his admission to the kindergarten,— to the one who stands before us at the close of the century and who is admirably portrayed in the picture facing this sketch.

At the present time Tommy shows an activity both of body and of mind, which is indefatigable and which forms a striking contrast to the lethargy of his early years. He is doing something all the time. He thinks, plans, executes, achieves. He enjoys life im-

mensely and is full of sportiveness and jollity, as well as of amiability and of affection for those around him. His heart is as tender as it is pure and spotless. He keeps vigilantly the current of thought scrupulously clear and absolutely clean. Candor, serenity, generosity, patience, perseverance, devotion to duty, unswerving loyalty to truth, these constitute the principal traits of his character. He is a faithful and persistent worker. In whatever he undertakes to do he evinces an unflagging energy and sustained industry. He has an unquenchable fondness for fun and for playing tricks upon others, but there is not a vestige of malice or of cruelty in his jokes.

TOMMY STRINGER AS HE APPEARED SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING IN BOSTON.

The grand work of rescuing this unfortunate boy could hardly have been accomplished anywhere outside of the kindergarten. There was no place so well fitted as this for its performance. Here Tommy found those opportunities, which were needed to secure his salvation from the thraldom of his triple affliction and his elevation in the scale of intelligence. Here he was surrounded by everything that was good and gentle and lovely and inspiring. Here he tasted the

fruit of parental affection and drank the milk of human kindness in abundance. Here his wants were promptly supplied and the work of his transformation and development was carried on with diligent care and watched over with assiduous solicitude. Here he lived and grew in the light of love and sympathy and was steeped in them, moulded by them and transfigured into their own image. Lastly, it was in the vivifying air and genial warmth of this garden of childhood that the sound seeds of the qualities of his character, which had been planted in the soil of his mind by the hand of nature, were fostered and freed from noxious weeds and are now sprouting and blossoming forth into physical strength, intellectual power and moral beauty.

Tommy has been peculiarly fortunate in all his relations and associations, but especially in the uprightness and nobility of the character of those persons under whose immediate control he was placed. He has been tenderly protected and carefully shielded from all mean, deceitful and debasing influences, which might pervert his mind, shake his confidence in justice and friendship, destroy his love of truth and veracity, ruin his simple and fearless trust in human goodness and upset his implicit faith in the kindness, sincerity and probity of his fellow men. Nor has he ever come in contact with unscrupulous tutors and dishonest or vindictive mentors, whose sole aim in caring for him would have been to secure for themselves a comfortable place and fame as distinguished pedagogues and who, in order to be able to accomplish some selfish end, would not have hesitated to drag him into the mire of falsehood and deceit, to use him as the means for obtaining personal advantages or for gaining admission

to polite society and literary circles, and to fill his soul with gloomy views and his heart with bitter feelings of distrust and sentiments of arrogance and ingratitude.

During the past year there have occurred in Tommy's life two events of paramount importance and of great help and usefulness to him.

First, he was admitted early in the autumn to the Lowell public grammar school in Roxbury and took his place among the pupils of the sixth grade. Then, at the beginning of the spring vacation in April, he was enabled, through the unfailing kindness of his dear friend, Mr. William T. Ellis of Philadelphia, to visit both that city and Washington.

On entering the Lowell school Tommy was very kindly received by its master, as well as by the teacher of the sixth grade, in which he was placed, and he was made to feel quite at home. He began to work with great earnestness and assiduity and by means of his appliances and with the aid of his tutor and interpreter he succeeded in keeping up with his classmates in all their studies and in doing as well as most of them. Owing to the peculiarity of his case and to the manliness of his bearing, he was the centre of loving solicitude and tender compassion among his young companions, and it is the voluntary testimony of the teachers of the Lowell school, that the chivalry which he aroused, even in the roughest and most troublesome pupil, more than compensates for the slight loss of attention through interest in him.

The noble sentiments and humane feelings which Tommy's presence excites are not confined to the pupils of the Lowell grammar school nor to Boston and Massachusetts. They are found through the

length and the breadth of the country. One of the most touching incidents, which has come to our knowledge, was the personal sacrifice made by a little boy of Tommy's age,—one of the scholars in the infant class of a Sunday school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was sick with typhoid fever for a long time. During his protracted illness he exacted from his parents five cents for every dose of medicine taken by himself, which sum was to be given to Tommy Stringer. These little contributions, added together, made a total of ten dollars, and this amount was sent to Tommy by his unknown young friend as soon as the latter had been restored to health and was able to join his class in the Sunday school and confer with its treasurer. A more pathetic instance of genuine and cordial interest, actively manifested by a temporary sufferer in one who is fated to go through life without hearing a single note of the music of the birds or getting a glimpse of the beauties of the visible world, can hardly be found in the annals of kind and tender-hearted children.

Tommy's trip to Philadelphia and Washington has proved a source of great benefit and of inexpressible joy to him. Through it fresh fields of knowledge and new channels of thought have been opened to his keen mind. Among the many pleasant excursions which he enjoyed there was a delightful visit to the United States mint in Philadelphia, where the successive processes of coinage were revealed to him. The facts thus learned were embodied by the boy himself in a brief descriptive paper, which he read before the audience at the commencement exercises in Tremont Temple in June last. He wrote it in the Braille point system and read it with his left hand

while his right one was engaged in spelling it out in the manual alphabet for interpretation to the large number of guests, who listened to every word with intense interest. It was illustrated by objects, representing the things referred to in the paper, which Tommy held into view at the proper moments, and the happy smile with which he carried out the suggestion at the conclusion of his exercise, by pocketing his coin, showed how thoroughly he enjoyed his little joke. The paper is here given in full.

The Story of a Dime.

My first home was a deep, dark mine, far away in the Rocky Mountains, and here my name was Silver Ore. One day, some miners came, took me out, and sent me to the smelter, where the silver was separated from the rock. Then I heard men say: "This silver is for the Mint," so I knew that I was to be sent to Philadelphia to be made into money. The first man whom I saw there was the assayer. He weighed and measured me, and put me in a tube with some alloy, because pure silver would be too soft to use. Then I heard him say: "Take this to the furnace." That was a hot place! The silver, in many little cups, was put in the furnace. Then the melted silver was turned into moulds. These thick bars were pressed between heavy rollers, then cut into the different sized coins, and the edges of these were then marked.

In the stamping-room, men fed the machines all day, with money. Then the coin was weighed on great scales, tied in bags, sixty pounds in a bag, and carried away.

Now I am really a piece of money, ready to travel all over the world. I may help to buy many beautiful and useful things, and find many strange homes. But the best and safest place of all — for a dime — is in the bottom of a little boy's pocket.

Two of the stanchest friends and most constant benefactors not of Tommy alone but of all needy and suffering children, Mrs. Quincy A. Shaw and Mrs.

William H. Slocum, have made him exceedingly happy. The former has presented him with a sloyd-bench of the newest and most improved pattern, supplied with a full complement of tools, and the latter has purchased for him a companion bicycle, on which he rides with the guidance of a seeing person. Both of these invaluable gifts afford to him very great pleasure and the means of exercise and recreation. In the following letter, which he wrote to me last summer, he makes special mention of them, as well as of his trip to Philadelphia and Washington: —

JAMAICA PLAIN June 25.

DEAR MR. ANAGNOS It is a long time since you went away. Are you having a good time? We are all going away for vacation very soon. Mrs. Shaw has given me a sloyd bench to use at Wrentham with all the tools. I am going to take care of Mr. Brown's home now. I will work hard all summer. Mrs. Slocum has given me a wheel and all the boys have fun riding it. I had a very good time when I went to Philadelphia and Washington in April. I went to the White House. We came home on the boat and slept on it all night. I hope that you will have a very pleasant summer and come back safely next fall.

Good-bye. With much love TOM STRINGER.

Under the supervision of his kind friend, Mr. Gustaf Larsson, Tommy continues to take lessons in sloyd from the same skilful and devoted instructors, who have shown great interest in his manual training.

Miss Helen S. Conley, who for the past seven years has been Tommy's special teacher, sincere friend, devoted companion and unselfish assistant, has prepared with great care a full report of his work and experiences during the past twelve months. In point of accuracy of statement, clearness of expression, skilful grouping of facts and general excellence, this account

is all that could be desired, and we take pleasure in publishing it herewith *in toto*, being sure that it will be eagerly read by those who take a deep interest in the unfortunate boy.

The opening of the school-year last September marked for Tommy the beginning of a new epoch in his life, when he was transferred from the kindergarten department to the primary building. With apparent realization of his added dignity and importance, he settled himself and his possessions in his new home, feeling evidently that this was the first vital step in putting away forever childish things and in becoming a man, which is the summit of his ambition. The change proved at once to be wise and beneficial, for the sense of larger things, which all his surroundings suggested, reacted as a mental stimulus, and the desire to rival "the big boys" in all their achievements was a constant spur to energies oft-times prone to flag. With the facility of childhood he adapted himself to the new and strange conditions, finding the keenest satisfaction and enjoyment in the fact that he could feel a personal ownership in the new building, characterized by Tommy as "a pretty house," because of its unmarred freshness. The year thus began most auspiciously for the little fellow, happy in his environment.

For the first few months of the term, Tommy entered the classes with the primary boys, taking the regular course of work assigned to them. Then it was deemed advisable to make a change, both for the purpose of comparing Tommy's standing in all lines of general knowledge with that of normal boys of his own age and also of bringing him into contact with the world outside the kindergarten since it may be necessary hereafter for him to live there. A request for Tommy's admission to one of the public grammar schools in the vicinity of the kindergarten was therefore made. With perfect willingness and great kindness on the part of both principal and teacher, the request was granted, and Tommy became a regular attendant at the Lowell school, entering the sixth grade.

It is safe to say that not one of all the pupils who daily entered the school did so with greater alacrity or found more pleasure in the work than Tommy. No change in the routine of class work was made for his benefit, and no concessions were granted, save a few which were absolutely unavoidable. Using his own appliances and having the prescribed work for the day interpreted to him through the medium of these and of the manual alphabet, he found no difficulty in following the general line of study. It was a satisfaction to his teachers and friends to learn that, in most respects, Tommy's knowledge and ability compared favorably with those of boys whose average age was but little below his own. After several weeks of attendance at the Lowell school, the results of the experiment began to be evident, and they were wholly gratifying. There could be detected an increase in ambition and self-reliance, and a recognition of the necessity of application, if he, alone, would not be found with a task unfinished, — a situation which he came to abhor and to look upon as humiliating and needless.

The sense of good comradeship, which gradually developed between Tommy and the other pupils, was one of the most valuable results attending those few months of companionship. On the part of the normal children, Tommy's presence among them awakened all the chivalry and unselfishness of their natures, and it was the cordial testimony of the teacher that any inattention in the case of the pupils, created by Tommy's presence in the school-room, was far outweighed by the spirit which had been unconsciously engendered in all, even in the hardest, roughest boy, whom all other means had failed to reach. As for Tommy, he thoroughly enjoyed the association with the other children, seeming to realize intuitively that some subtle difference existed between them and himself and, accordingly, to admire them and emulate their accomplishments. To be one of this little school-world, to work at a desk and feel the importance of his position as a school-boy, was worth even the struggle with long division and the conquest of the perplexities of decimals and fractions. Because "the big boys" considered it neces-

sary to learn how and when to use the marks of punctuation, Tommy at once decided that it was his duty to inform himself concerning these formerly despised adjuncts of composition, and he soon became proficient in their use. At the close of the term Tommy packed up his books for departure, assuring all that he would be glad to return in the autumn.

Two lessons each week in manual training have been taken by Tommy under the oversight of his good friend, Mr. Larsson, with no abatement on the part of his kind instructors of the skill and interest and devotion to Tommy's best good, which have characterized their teaching in previous years. His knowledge of the use of tools still continues to furnish Tommy with pleasure and profit, and the results of these years of instruction in sloyd now prove indisputably its value to him. It has meant to him, this year, happy employment for many a leisure hour, the pleasure of giving to others that which represented his own unaided efforts, and an increasing sense of independence as his confidence in his own skill and ability became more assured at each new step. The making of a nail-box for a friend who was furnishing a new home, a number of desk blotters and rulers for Christmas gifts and a new top for his sled, characteristically finished in October, and the repairing of divers broken toys, have been some of the many ways in which he has exercised his talent. In the regular sloyd work he has made a wood-carrier and a small cabinet or medicine-closet.

One of the greatest joys of Tommy's life has come to him with the ownership of a sloyd bench, a happiness made possible through the generosity of Mrs. Quincy A. Shaw, who not only gave the bench but also fitted it with all the requisite tools. This was sent to Wrentham for his use during the summer vacation. Long before the close of school, Tommy mentally located his bench, weighing the respective merits of one spot after another and finally announcing that he had decided to place it in "the barn near the window and the horse's stall," feeling sure that the space would admit it, and that the horse would enjoy his

companionship. In acknowledging the gift, Tommy declared "now I shall take all the care of Mr. Brown's house," feeling well equipped to undertake the welcome duty and daunted by nothing, for in "Mr. Brown's house" Tommy feels an equal share of privilege and responsibility with the owner. Subsequent events have proved that Tommy has valiantly kept to his purpose, and through the hot summer days he has found his greatest pleasure at his bench. He has neatly replaced worn door-sills with new ones, made a new barnyard gate and assumed the self-imposed duty of repairing the smoke-house, beginning the task by making a most ingenious shutter for an open window, which, he explained, would serve upon occasion either to allow the smoke to escape or to shut out the cold.

Another gift, for which it is indeed difficult to find fitting expression of appreciation, was that of a beautiful companion bicycle, given by Mrs. William H. Slocum. This has been a source of infinite pleasure and of great physical benefit to Tommy, who was indeed a proud and happy boy when he found that his desire for a wheel was to be gratified. He mastered at once the few difficulties incident to riding a vehicle of this sort and thenceforth enjoyed keenly the exhilarating sense of rapid motion and the tonic of air and sunshine. Nor were all the joys of this long-coveted possession realized by Tommy alone, for he was always ready to resign his place in favor of one of the other boys,— particularly when the ride was to be an early morning one before breakfast. If left in undisturbed enjoyment of that last half-hour in bed, he never failed to be in waiting at the barn upon the return of the riders, to see that the wheel was properly cared for and the barn locked,— a duty which he assumed of his own accord.

More and more Tommy is growing to feel the responsibility of himself and of his possessions, and a care and interest in those around him. This he is encouraged to do as far as possible, oftentimes with surprising and most satisfactory results. He will pack his own trunk as neatly and compactly as possible, collecting all necessary articles for a jour-

ney and proving as reliable as a memorandum in reminding others of the small details, so likely to be forgotten.

In common with all children, Tommy thoroughly enjoys the novelty and excitement of travel, but, his only journey of any length having been taken when he was far too young to appreciate it, his experience in this direction has been quite limited until this year. In the last spring vacation, however, a new and delightful opportunity came to Tommy through the great kindness of his good friend Mr. William T. Ellis, who arranged for the little fellow a trip to Philadelphia and Washington. With every faculty keenly alert to receive new impressions and with his mind ready and eager for information, Tommy was prepared to enjoy to the full every hour as it passed; and, when the journey was ended, his world had been infinitely broadened, for it is safe to venture the assertion that few boys of thirteen return from a pleasure trip with a better recollection of what they have seen or a more definite knowledge of the places and objects visited than Tommy displayed. He proved himself one of the best of travellers and an ideal companion, for the common annoyances, incident to travel, were calmly accepted by him as inevitable, and no amount of fatigue or excitement produced the least display of irritation on his part. His excellent memory and sense of responsibility enabled him to take care of himself and his possessions with little assistance from others.

New York has long been a Mecca, to which he has wished to turn his steps, but lack of time made sight-seeing there impossible. Tommy's dreams of the great metropolis suffered a downfall, for the hurried transit across the city and the roughness of the street pavements left a very vivid impression upon his mind. Thereafter, when he wished a simile for instability and general discomfort, he would say, "like the New York cabs." Stepping from the train in Philadelphia, almost before greetings were exchanged with his friends, Tommy drew himself up and with an air of pride remarked, "my state," like one, who after long absence had returned to claim his inheritance. From that moment until

his return to the state of his adoption, some new pleasure was constantly opening to him, and everything which love and thoughtfulness could devise was made to minister to his enjoyment.

There was a visit to the mint, a veritable treasure-house into whose innermost recesses Tommy was privileged to penetrate, for here, as everywhere, bolts and bars gave way before him. With great satisfaction Tommy here exchanged a silver quarter for bright new pennies to take as souvenirs to "all the boys." Each day brought some new delight in visits to the historic and interesting spots, in which Philadelphia abounds, all bringing valuable knowledge to Tommy, from whom they often elicited comments both striking and original. Were the truth told, he would doubtless count as best among the happy experiences of that week his visit to the great locomotive works, where he examined the construction and mechanism of the huge engines to his entire satisfaction, for nineteenth-century achievements are certainly of more vital interest to Tommy than the most valiant deeds of a century ago.

After a week in Philadelphia, Tommy continued his journey to Washington. Here came his first experience of hotel life, and how thoroughly he did enjoy it! Washington presents to all sight-seers a field both profitable and interesting, and Tommy certainly found this to be true. But the most memorable occasion of all was his visit to the white house, and nowhere did the independence of the spirit of young America manifest itself more plainly than in his interview with the president. Fatigued by the unusual heat of the season and the constant strain of sight-seeing, Tommy was thoroughly tired when the hour appointed for his visit to the executive mansion arrived. After acknowledging the introduction to the president, Tommy prepared to seat himself. Being advised to remain standing during the conversation, he earnestly remonstrated: "I am too tired. The president can sit down too. There are many chairs." However, he finally abandoned this idea and decided to conform to the etiquette required by the occasion. Feeling that the

time was brief, Tommy lost none in gaining from the president all the information possible. He first ascertained the name of the state which the president claimed as his and then plied him with innumerable questions concerning the "red room," the "blue room" and the "green room." With sincere interest and sympathy, plainly manifested, the president asked Tommy if he would not like to see "his house." The delighted acceptance of the proffered privilege left no room for doubt, and Tommy went eagerly from room to room, noting the minutest details of finishing and furnishing, and in the end annoucing that "the blue room is the prettiest," being duly impressed with the silk hangings on the walls.

Tommy had learned about the destruction of Pompeii not long before he went to the national capital, and the story was made real to him by a visit to the halls of the ancients, where, without reservation, Tommy was free to wander and examine the accumulations of years. His first ride in an automobile was through the city of Washington, a red-letter experience for him, since he is deeply interested in electricity, and his questions concerning this strange vehicle were very intelligent.

The journey home was made by steamer from New York, a decided novelty to Tommy as it was his first night upon the water. To the kindness of Mr. O. L. Taylor of the Fall River line of steamboats, this pleasure was due, for, learning of Tommy's visit to Washington, he asked the privilege of providing two tickets over that route for the travellers' return. The construction and arrangement of so large a boat was a constant source of inquiry on Tommy's part, the sleeping accommodations in particular exciting his interest. He at once selected the upper berth for himself, and then, fearing that he had taken the best and left his friend in an uncomfortable position, he issued frequent warnings not to "bump your head" to the occupant of the lower berth. In a letter of acknowledgment written after his return, he described the boat trip thus: "It was a very nice boat and a

very pretty boat. The beds were very small and very high — but I did not fall out — for it was just like sleeping in a sink." Who but Tommy would ever have thought of such a comparison?

To all who opened their doors in gracious and delightful hospitality and who were instrumental in bringing so much happiness to him, Tommy surely owes a debt of gratitude, for by the experiences of these ten days, he has gained a wealth of knowledge of incalculable benefit and an amount of pleasure beyond computation.

After such a royal good time it was a little hard to settle down once more to fractions and geography and articulation, but Tommy made a valiant effort to do so, and thus, by faithful application to the duties of each day, the year of study drew to a successful close.

The twelve months have brought many changes to Tommy, both physical and mental, and it is hard to realize that the little boy is so fast disappearing and the manly, independent and dignified one taking his place. Little by little, the close surveillance has been relaxed, reliance now being placed upon Tommy's own sense of right and honor to control his action,— upon a principle rather than upon conformity to definite rules. Tommy has not taken advantage of this, for though oftentimes mischievous and sometimes irritable, he is never maliciously naughty, and the necessity for discipline during the past year has been very slight. Seeing a possible temptation or quicksand before him, it is usually sufficient for one to say, "of course you would not do that, for you know better, and I can trust you." Whether he ever contemplated the deed or not, having been considered virtuous, he feels it incumbent upon him to live up to his reputation.

The other boys are loyal and generous to a fault where Tommy is concerned, and, unless one is an eye-witness to a misdemeanor on his part, it is almost impossible to get one of his schoolmates to admit that Tommy is in the wrong. On one occasion he "borrowed" from

another boy some much desired article, without the preliminary of seeking permission and regardless of the distinction between "mine and thine." With Tommy's full knowledge of the transaction and of the reason for it, this loss was made good from Tommy's treasures. He recognized the justice of the act, and uttered no remonstrance, even helping in the selection of the articles. But the remarks, "it is too mean to treat poor Tom this way," and "what's the first day I can give it back to him?" proved that the young victim of Tommy's rapacity was quite unconvinced that the latter's moral interests required such treatment of him.

The demands of Tommy's active mind grow increasingly hard to satisfy, for the air above, the earth beneath and the waters under the earth, all present to him a field for research and thought. Hitherto it has been deemed advisable to give to him no definite religious instruction, but to wait rather until his mind, developed sufficiently to comprehend the idea of a creative power, should prove itself so by reaching out for the truths, which would answer his own questionings. Slowly but surely, from the depths of his own consciousness alone, Tommy has recognized, through the visible, tangible reality of the known, the supreme power behind it in the unknown. Essentially a child of nature, with a close and personal love for all her children, the birds and trees and flowers, he has walked most naturally and sweetly "from nature up to nature's God." Knowing man's power, he came also to realize its limitations. With growing knowledge, he said: "The world is very large. Men make houses and ships, but men cannot make land. Who made the land?" "Who sends the rain?" "Who tells the birds where and when to go?" From year to year he has seen the unfailing regularity of the return of the seasons and has learned that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, have not ceased, that night ever follows the day and that the tides ebb and flow,— all controlled by a more than human power "which governs the world it created." So Tommy has come to feel that this power, which brings such wonderful blessings into

our lives, is one not to be feared but to be loved, and, with no creed nor ritual nor dogma, to formulate for himself his simple childish faith.

Often in the past Tommy's progress has seemed slow indeed and well nigh hopeless; yet one cannot but feel, as one looks at him today, that the faith, which long ago braved opposition and criticism to lift him from that darkness and stillness, has been vindicated. Today Tommy stands, eager and expectant, just at the threshold of a larger life, as anxious to press forward now as nine years ago he was hesitating and reluctant, knowing then not even the hand that should lead him.

Mecca, the central and most holy city of all Islam, is no more attractive to the Moslems than Wrentham is to Tommy. He is as eager to visit that town and spend weeks and months on the farm of the Rev. William L. Brown, examining all its parts, as every Mohammedan is to undertake a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Mahomet and walk around the sacred shrine of Kaaba in the centre of the immense enclosure of the great mosque, starting from the famous "black stone," laid in its corner, which is believed to have been brought from heaven by angels and which is touched and kissed by the faithful with the highest veneration.

Throughout the summer vacation Tommy is a welcome guest in the family of his dear friend, Mr. Brown, and is considered as one of its members. He is so kindly treated and so affectionately cherished, that he has come to regard Mr. Brown's residence as his own home and to feel that he must share with its owner in the care and responsibility of the estate. He makes frequent tours of inspection all over the place,— through the rooms and the cellar of the house, through the barn and the shed, the garden and the

orchard, over the stone walls and the fences,— and, apart from his amusements, many are the changes and improvements which his busy brain plans and his deft fingers execute. He is as skilful in making repairs and additions of various kinds as he is quick in discovering the need of them.

Miss Laura E. Brown, Tommy's former teacher, is strongly attached to him. She looks after him and cares for him in the best possible manner while he stays at her father's house. Like Miss Conley, she takes the most profound interest in the development of his mental faculties and the formation of his character and gives to him cheerfully her time and attention to the full extent of her strength. From the notes, which she kept during the summer months, she has written with great care and excellent taste a brief statement of what Tommy did and how he spent his vacation at Wrentham. This account forms a continuation of that of Miss Conley and is published herewith as its complement.

Once more, as the vacation season draws to a close, an outline may be given of the manner, in which Tommy has spent the past twelve weeks in Wrentham. Throughout the entire period he has been very well and full of such ceaseless activity as a healthy boy of fourteen should display.

A source of endless pleasure and of beneficial occupation was provided for Tommy in the kind gift of Mrs. Quincy A. Shaw, that of a sloyd-bench and the requisite tools, and the greater part of his time was spent in their use. Indeed, the barn, in which the bench was kept, was the first place in which he was sought, when wanted. He would often speak of John, the boy employed on the farm, as "a farmer boy," but of himself, with evident pride, as "a carpenter boy."

Many were the tasks which he considered it necessary to perform, calling his hammer, screw-driver, saw and plane into

service. One of his first achievements was to fit to the lower part of the bench a removable shelf, made of two boards joined by cleats, which held numerous boxes of nails, screws and extra tools, while the wall near by was decorated with odds and ends of iron, brass or steel, hung on nails. This was called a hardware store, but the public was not desired to make any purchases, since Tommy decided that he needed them for his own use. These arrangements completed, Tommy sallied forth in search of work.

Some of the boards in the flooring of the porch were replaced, a railing was put up for aid in going up and down the shop stairs, and hooks were driven into the walls to fasten every door which was in any danger of being slammed by the wind. The railing was considered a pressing need by Tommy, since one member of the family had fallen down these rather steep stairs. When this was in place, Tommy walked up and down the stairs with a tread, which could be heard all over the house. When a step was found to have been broken by this means, it furnished Tommy with an excuse to "put on a new board. The old step was not strong and it was better to have a new one, as it might have broken and hurt Mr. Brown badly."

One morning Tommy came into the house to announce that he had just mended the cows' stalls, where they had torn down the boards with their horns and that twelve nails had been required to repair the damage, the number showing the extent and importance of the work to his mind. His explanation ended, as usual, with the remark: "Mr. Brown will be so glad to have me do it."

Before the close of the school-year, Tommy had made a wooden shutter for the smoke-house. When this had been put into place with hinges, a fastener and a long hook to hold it open at the proper angle for the fresh air to come in, Tommy adopted this little building as his especial field of labor. The wooden button on the door was removed, and a latch, evolved from discarded pieces of brass and iron, was substituted. A large wooden knocker was screwed on the outside for the use of callers, since the door was always

fastened when Tommy was "at home." An old chair and stand were procured for furniture, although the former seldom held anything except tools or strips of wood. The sliding windows were taken out, given new frames and replaced on hinges, and bars, thick and strong, were nailed across the outside of the windows to prevent the cows from breaking the glass with their horns. Thus securely protected, Tommy spent many happy hours in the little house, now putting up a shelf, or adjusting a board, or adding a brace to strengthen some part of his habitation.

Having arranged the interior to his satisfaction, Tommy turned his attention to the surroundings. Close by the smoke-house was a stone wall which had been partly overthrown. In a few days, not only was the wall rebuilt very creditably, but the loose stones and pine needles were neatly cleared away.

But Tommy's crowning achievement was the planning of a means of opening a window in the shed, which had never been honored by spring or weight. By his ingenious arrangement it was easily raised or lowered and was made self-locking by a piece of iron, which dropped back when the window was closed, thus acting as a check. At the top of the lower sash a cord was fastened, which ran through pulleys overhead and down one side of the window. The weight at the end of the cord was a bar of iron, which swung to and fro freely. Tommy considered this dangerous for cats and people, so he devised a scheme for preventing any accident. With strips of leather he fastened to the wall a piece of iron piping, one end resting on the floor, the top snugly covered with a tin can in which there was a hole for the cord to pass through, the weight being thus secured in a box.

Another idea, in executing which Tommy had the assistance of a kind friend, was that of a "bicycle," or "foot-car," as it was finally called. It looked not unlike a carpenter's horse, but instead of four legs it had but two, terminating in wooden wheels. In front a bell was held aloft by a strip of iron, and its tinkle could be heard whenever Tommy took a ride, sitting astride his

queer vehicle. Provision was made for a passenger, but no other child derived the pleasure that he himself did from his car. If while on the road Tommy perceived the approach of a wagon, he grasped his car quickly and wheeled it into the grass, returning to the road when the team had passed. The car was completed toward the end of the week and the desire to use it on Sunday was strong. On being refused permission to do so, he argued: "The electric cars and steam cars run on Sunday." He was reminded that he had six days for work and play and one day for rest. "But the conductors and motor men work on Sundays," objected Tommy. "Did God tell them to rest?" "Have they bibles?" "Do they go to church?" were some of the many questions which followed.

Tommy frequently spoke of God and expressed some original and quaint ideas, showing the workings of his mind. One day he asked questions concerning the contents of a purse. When he was told to whom it belonged, he replied: "No, it is God's money." At another time his puzzling question, "who helps John ride his bicycle?" was answered thus: "John works the pedals with his own feet," but Tommy said, correcting the speaker, "God makes John strong and helps him ride his wheel." At bedtime one night Tommy mentioned a slight trouble, but with "God will make it well," he dismissed the subject. In the morning he announced cheerfully: "It is all better. God fixed it."

Another of Tommy's choicest possessions was the bicycle, which Mrs. W. H. Slocum gave him and from which he derived great enjoyment, although the excessive heat and dust prevented him from using it as much as he would otherwise have done. He took pride in sitting up very straight and in doing more than half the pushing, and, after the first slight fear was overcome, he enjoyed riding very fast.

All of the hours were not spent in pursuing his own pleasure, for, aside from the one or two hours of study, which Tommy accomplished daily, he performed many

little tasks to aid the family. The winter's supply of wood was housed as formerly, the clothes wringer and ice-cream freezer were turned, doubtless with preference for the latter, water was pumped and the tubs emptied and the wood-box was kept well filled, all by the same busy hands.

Two weeks before the time for returning to school, Tommy packed up his bench and cleaned the tools with an unnecessary amount of oil for fear of rust. Boxes of choice bits of metal, nails, screws and other things dear to his heart were neatly tied up days before hand, awaiting the time for packing his trunk. Then began the last lingering but business-like survey of the premises. Nothing was overlooked, and by the close of the last day everything had been completed. Then, with a firm conviction that he had "helped Mr. Brown" by all his doings, Tommy was again ready for school.

Thus runs the story of Tommy's life and work at school and in his beloved summer home at Wrentham, and also of his visit to Philadelphia and Washington with his experiences at the white house and his sensations in the great government buildings. An excellent photograph of the dear boy, taken a few weeks ago, has been reproduced and placed at the beginning of this account, showing how much he has grown and how manly he looks.

We may repeat here what has been said in our last annual report, that so far as achievement of results is concerned Tommy's record surpasses that of all other persons in his condition. It bears witness to the marked enlargement of the capacities of his mind, the steady development of the sweetness of his nature and the constant increase of the admirable qualities of his character. Moreover, it speaks very eloquently of the unstinted liberality of those who have kindly volun-

teered to supply the means for his maintenance and education. Nothing could have been done without their assistance.

The most prominent of Tommy's benefactors, to whose generosity his emancipation and training are mainly due, are Mr. Joseph B. Glover, a dear anonymous friend, who has paid from time to time such deficits as occurred in Tommy's accounts and upon whom we are obliged to call again this year for the amount of $85.34, Mrs. Warren B. Potter, Mrs. George W. Wales, Mrs. Annie B. Matthews, Miss Sarah M. Fay, A.B., Mrs. A. A. Ballou, Detroit, Michigan, Dr. B. H. Buxton, New York, Master Willie B. Conrad, Mr. James Eckersley of Plattsburgh, N.Y., Mrs. J. Conklin Brown of Berkeley, California, and her little son Warner, the Misses Jane F. and Lucia Dow of Milton, Miss Mary D. Sohier, Mrs. Dudley L. Pickman, Mrs. B. L. Young, Mrs. John Jay Chapman of New York, Miss Susan Day Kimball, Miss Eleanor G. May, trustee of the Lydia Maria Child fund, Mrs. William H. Slocum, Mr. John Gribbel, Philadelphia, Mrs. M. Abbie Newell, Mrs. Henrietta M. Reed, Mrs. E. Rollins Morse, children of the kindergarten at Florence, Mass., Mr. Robert D. McGonnigle of Pittsburg, Pa., the late Miss Emily M. Everett of Cleveland, Ohio, and many others, whose names are printed in full in another part of this report. All these generous and kind-hearted givers have ample reason to rejoice over the splendid results which have been obtained by the help of their gifts. Through their liberality Tommy has been restored to human fellowship, is comforted in the bosom of society and is enjoying the advantages of education and the blessings of domestic life.

I cannot refrain from speaking at this juncture of the groundlessness of the impression, which prevails among many people, that sufficient provision has already been made for Tommy, that he is favored with a large number of sympathizers who are actively interested in him, and that all his wants, present and future, are amply supplied. I wish from the bottom of my heart, that these notions were correct; but I am grieved to be obliged to state that they are entirely erroneous.

The truth of the matter is that, with the exception of the amount of fifty dollars per annum, which has been provided for him through the keen foresight and thoughtful generosity of his beloved friend, Mr. Joseph B. Glover, Tommy has nothing coming to him regularly from any direction. Indeed, it is with immense difficulty and by means of constant personal appeals that the requisite sum of money for his support is obtained.

But for obvious reasons this state of things is exceedingly precarious, and we feel, that a surer and more permanent source of revenue ought to be procured for the unfortunate boy without further delay. Action should be taken while the intelligent and well-to-do members of our community are still manifesting both a profound interest in Tommy and his work and a disposition to lend a helping hand to him and encourage him to go forward. It is high time for us to seize the opportunity and inaugurate an immediate movement for securing a fund for his benefit large enough to yield a yearly income of five hundred dollars, such fund to be raised with the distinct understanding that it is to be placed under the care and control of the trustees of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts

School for the Blind, and that only its net income is to be given to Tommy so long as he lives or is in need of it, the principal remaining intact forever. It should be further understood, that at his death, or when he is otherwise provided for, another child similarly afflicted shall have the benefit of this fund.

With this explanation we appeal most earnestly to the public in general and to Tommy's loyal friends and benefactors in particular, asking them for gifts toward this permanent fund, as well as for a sufficient number of annual subscriptions to pay his current expenses, and we fervently hope that this request will meet with a favorable response.

From the depths of the dense darkness and awful stillness in which he is plunged, the unfortunate boy is as incapable of pleading his own case in eloquent words as he is of singing a song of glee or a carol of joy. His voice can be of no service to him in portraying his condition or in presenting his claim to a thorough education, which is to him the veritable bread of life and therefore of infinitely greater importance than to children possessed of all their faculties. In all probability he does not realize fully the extent of his indebtedness to his benefactors, and therefore he does not take up his pencil to write a few words to them, acknowledging their goodness towards him and expressing his sentiments of high appreciation and of profound gratitude to them for what they have done for him. Nevertheless, he is gradually becoming conscious of the inestimable value of the aid which they bestow upon him, and, although mutely and unostentatiously yet touchingly and earnestly,—

> He sends a prayer from his heart's deep core,
> And flings a plea upwards to heaven's door,

for their spiritual well-being, as well as for their happiness and continued prosperity.

In the whole range of humble and pathetic supplications is there one, which can reach the throne of glory more quickly or will be heard more attentively than that, which emanates from the white soul and the sealed lips of Tommy Stringer?

DONATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THOMAS STRINGER.

From August 31, 1899, to September 1, 1900.

A. B.,	$10.00
Ballou, Mrs. A. A., Detroit, Mich.,	10.00
Brown, Mrs. J. Conklin, Berkeley, Cal.,	10.00
Bryant, Mr. John D.,	5.00
Buxton, Dr. B. H., New York,	15.00
Calvary Presbyterian Sunday-school, Wyncote, Pa., through Mr. Homer L. Pond,	20.50
Chapman, Mrs. Elizabeth W., New York,	25.00
Children of the Ashmont Hall School, Dorchester, through Miss Mary E. Nightingale,	6.25
Children of the first grade of Winthrop School, Brookline,	1.00
Children of Miss Katherine C. Baker's class of the Cogswell Primary School, Ipswich,	2.00
Children's Aid Society of Washington County, Pa.,	25.00
Churchill, Mrs. Annie S., New Britain, Conn.,	2.00
Conant, Miss Grace W., Wellesley Hills,	2.00
Conrad, Master Willie Britton,	10.00
Dow, Miss Lucia A., Milton,	25.00
Fay, Miss Sarah M.,	50.00
First Parish Boys' Club,	5.00
George, Master Robert Hudson,	1.00
Gribbel, Mr. John, Philadelphia,	50.00
Hatch, Mrs. Jennie B., Reading,	5.00
Amount carried forward,	$279.75

Amount brought forward,	$279.75
Heath, Mrs. Sarah A.,	5.00
Hudson, Miss Mary R.,	1.00
Infant class Lend a Hand Club of Howard Sunday-school, Bulfinch street, Boston,	6.00
In memory of Miss Emily M. Everett,	25.00
Jackson, Mrs. Mary J.,	2.00
Jenckes, Dr. J. F.,	3.00
Junior Children's Aid Society of Washington County, Pa.,	37.00
Keeler, Mary F., Circle of King's Daughters, Somerville,	3.00
Kimball, Miss Susan Day,	25.00
Kindergarten at Florence, through Miss Frances H. Look,	5.00
Kindergarten department of Washington Street Baptist Church, Lynn,	5.00
Lilly Kindergarten at Florence, through Miss Frances H. Look,	5.00
Matthews, Mrs. Annie B.,	50.00
May, Miss Eleanor G., trustee of Lydia Maria Child fund,	35.00
McGonnigle, Mr. Robert D., Pittsburg, Pa.,	2.50
Mission Band of Congregational Church, Wollaston,	2.00
Moore, Mrs. G. W., Brookline,	2.50
Morse, Mrs. E. Rollins (annual),	5.00
Newell, Mrs. M. Abbie,	10.00
Peyraud, Mademoiselle Rosalie J. (annual),	1.00
Pickman, Mrs. D. L.,	10.00
Primary class in Sunday-school of Walnut Avenue Congregational Church,	5.00
Primary department of Immanuel Sunday-school, through Miss Antoinette Clapp,	10.00
Reed, Mrs. Henrietta M.,	50.00
"Rodelmer,"	2.75
Sohier, Miss Mary D.,	25.00
Sunday-school of First Methodist Protestant Church of Pittsburg, Pa., through Mr. Robert D. McGonnigle,	7.50
Amount carried forward,	$620.00

Amount brought forward,	$620.00
Treat, Mr. M. C., Washington, Pa., through Mr. John A. McIlvaine, Jr.,	10.00
Wales, Mrs. George W.,	50.00
Young, Mrs. B. L.,	10.00
Zakrzewska, Dr. Marie,	5.00
	$695.00

PERMANENT FUND FOR THOMAS STRINGER.

A. B.,	$100.00
Eckersley, Mr. James, Plattsburgh, N.Y.,	25.00
Friend C.,	10.00
Income from the Glover Fund,	40.00
Potter, Mrs. Warren B.,	100.00
	$275.00

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A THOMAS STRINGER; HIS
DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING...
(1901)

Date Due